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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001

General and complete disarmament: small arms

Programme budget implications of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/54/L.42/Rev.1

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

Addendum

Observations of the Committee on Conferences submitted in accordance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 35/10 A

1. In accordance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 35/10 A of 3 November 1980, by which the Assembly decided that all proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings made at sessions of the General Assembly should be reviewed by the Committee on Conferences when administrative implications were being considered under the requirements of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, the Committee on Conferences met on 18 November 1999 to review the implications of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/54/L.42/Rev.1, which the First Committee adopted by a recorded vote at its 25th meeting, on 8 November.

2. Under the terms of operative paragraph 9 of draft resolution A/C.1/54/L.42/Rev.1, the United Nations conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects and its preparatory committee would be provided with all necessary assistance, including the provision of essential background information, relevant documents and summary records. In paragraph 4 of the statement of programme budget implications before the First Committee (A/C.1/54/L.57), attention was drawn to the provisions of paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 37/14 C of 16 November 1982, in which the Assembly confirmed that summary records should not be provided to special conferences and their preparatory organs, with the exception of legal codification conferences, for which the needs

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would be determined in each case. The related conference-servicing costs are set out in the annex to document A/C.1/54/L.57.

3. In a Secretariat paper (A/AC.172/1999/CRP.11) before the Committee on Conferences at its 425th and 426th meetings, held on 18 November and 2 December 1999, respectively, the provisions of paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 37/14 C were cited. It was further pointed out that in paragraph 6 of that resolution, in referring to earlier paragraphs setting forth arrangements for the provision of meeting records for the Assembly and its subsidiary organs, the Assembly stated that any further exception would require the explicit approval of the Assembly in a pertinent resolution or decision. Attention was also drawn to guideline 1 in the annex to resolution 36/117 D, which states: "All measures to control and limit documentation in force at the time when a special conference is being prepared or held shall apply to documentation prepared for that conference as well as to any preparatory organ that may be designated".

4. The existing guidelines on meeting records and documentation for subsidiary organs, and entitlements to summary records for special conferences and their preparatory organs, were reiterated, and it was noted that those provisions had also been brought to the attention of the First Committee when it considered the matter.

5. While the conference was supported and its importance recognized, the need for providing summary records to the conference and its preparatory committee was questioned, especially in view of the General Assembly resolutions and guidelines on the control and limitation of documentation. It was also felt that there was a lack of information and justification for taking action on the matter. The view was also expressed that the provision of summary records would benefit smaller delegations who would not be able to participate effectively in such meetings, as well as civil society.

6. The representative of the Department for Disarmament Affairs informed the Committee on Conferences that the provisions of General Assembly resolution 37/14 C had been brought to the attention of the sponsors of the draft resolution, who responded that, given the importance of the issue, summary records would provide a proper record of the deliberations on the various policies of States and could be transmitted to their capitals for information. In response to a request for additional justification, the Department for Disarmament Affairs consulted again with the sponsors on the matter. Further justification was provided as follows:

(a) The United Nations conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, to be held in June/July 2001, would be the first United Nations conference to deliberate in the field of disarmament since the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament was held in 1988;

(b) Taking into consideration the large impact of small arms on areas devastated by conflict and the great interest in this issue of affected countries and civil society, including many non-governmental organizations, summary records of the Conference, as requested in operative paragraph 9 of draft resolution (A/C.1/54/L.42/Rev.1), would provide an official account of the deliberations for the international community.

7. In response to the questions raised, the Secretariat provided the information, as stated in the draft resolution, that the first session of the preparatory committee would be held in New York from 28 February to 3 March 2000, and that the preparatory committee would decide at that session on the date and venue of the conference in 2001, as well as on the dates and venue of its subsequent sessions. Any request for a change in venue from the established headquarters, which is New York, would be brought to the attention of the Committee on Conferences. The Committee was also informed that previous United Nations special

conferences, other than codification conferences, had not been granted a waiver for the provision of written meeting records. Special sessions of the General Assembly were entitled to verbatim records. It was further clarified that, in the case under review, summary records were being requested for the conference and the sessions of its preparatory committee. The option of unedited transcripts had not been pursued as the First Committee was one of the bodies that had previously conducted an experiment and had opted not to pursue the provision of unedited transcripts. It was confirmed that press releases would be issued by the Department of Public Information in accordance with existing practice for coverage at open meetings.

8. Further comments were made by delegations to the effect that there were no grounds for deviating from established procedure, especially since no exceptions had been granted in the past, that the meetings would be held in New York, and that press releases would be issued. The question of small delegations not being able to cover all activities was again brought up, however.

9. During consultations among members, four options were discussed, namely:

(1) Summary records for the last two sessions of the preparatory committee;

(2) Summary records for the first and last sessions of the preparatory committee;

(3) Summary records for the Conference alone;

(4) Summary records for those meetings at which decisions would be taken.

10. A discussion was held, during which none of the options received sufficient support to be recommended.